

Canadians strongly support COVID-19 test requirement for travellers from China, but also question its efficacy

One-in-eight believe the policy to be racist, including more than half of those who oppose it

January 24, 2023 – China abandoning its COVID zero strategy has caused a ripple of concern around the globe as the world's second-most populous country faces an unprecedented wave of infections which has infected [as many as four-in-five people](#).

In response to rising cases in China, Canada, alongside other countries, set a new requirement this month that travellers from China must produce a negative COVID-19 test prior to takeoff.

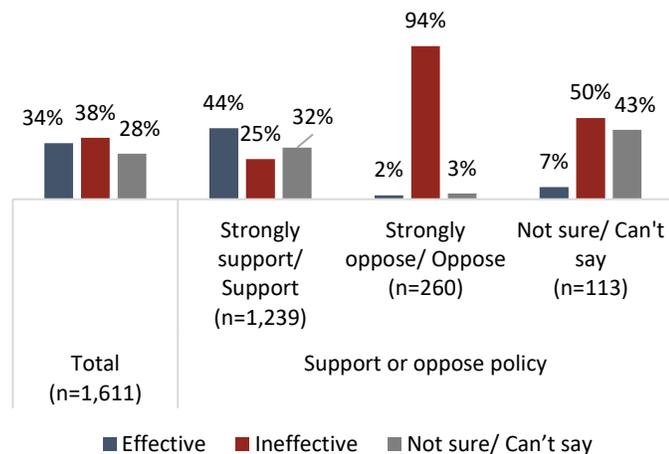
Data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds a majority of Canadians supportive of this policy, but unsure if it will be effective at reducing the spread of COVID-19 in their country. Indeed, Canadians who support the policy (77%) outnumber those who are opposed (16%) by nearly five-to-one.

However, those who believe the policy will be effective at reducing COVID-19 infections in Canada (34%) are in the minority. More Canadians believe it will be ineffective (38%) or are unsure (28%). And even among Canadians who support the policy, fewer than half (44%) say they believe it will be effective at preventing the spread of COVID-19.

There are other concerns with this policy. Some, [including the Chinese government](#), have called it “discriminatory”. Others have gone further and called it “[racist](#)”. The pandemic has produced plenty of negative side effects, including [discrimination and racism experienced by Canadians of Chinese descent](#). Some worry this new policy of testing travellers from China will [rekindle those ugly sentiments](#).

One-in-eight (13%) Canadians call the policy racist. However, more (73%) believe it's not. Canadians who identify as visible minorities are twice as likely to label the policy racist (23%) than those who don't identify as such (10%). Still, majorities of those who identify as visible minority (62%) and those who don't (76%) say the policy is not racist.

And, thinking of this policy, do you think it will be effective at reducing the spread of COVID-19 in Canada, or not?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Jan. 6-10, 2023 among a representative randomized sample of 1,611 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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More Key Findings:

- Nearly all (94%) of those who oppose the COVID-19 testing policy for travellers from China believe it won't be effective at reducing the spread of the virus in Canada.
- One-in-five (19%) Canadians say they are not travelling at all because they are worried about COVID-19. A further 33 per cent say they have approached their recent travel with caution. Two-in-five (41%) are less worried about the risk of COVID-19 when it comes to travel.
- Two-in-five (37%) of those who have not travelled at all outside of their province since March 2022 say they aren't travelling because they worry about catching COVID-19.

About ARI

The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

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Part One: Canada's COVID-19 testing policy for travellers from China

After nearly three years of some of the strictest COVID-19 policies in the world, China ended its so-called zero-COVID strategy [in December](#). The policy shift meant increased freedom for the citizens of the world's second-most populous country, but a surge in infections and deaths among a population with little exposure to the virus, and [vaccination](#) that may not be effective against the most common strain of COVID-19.

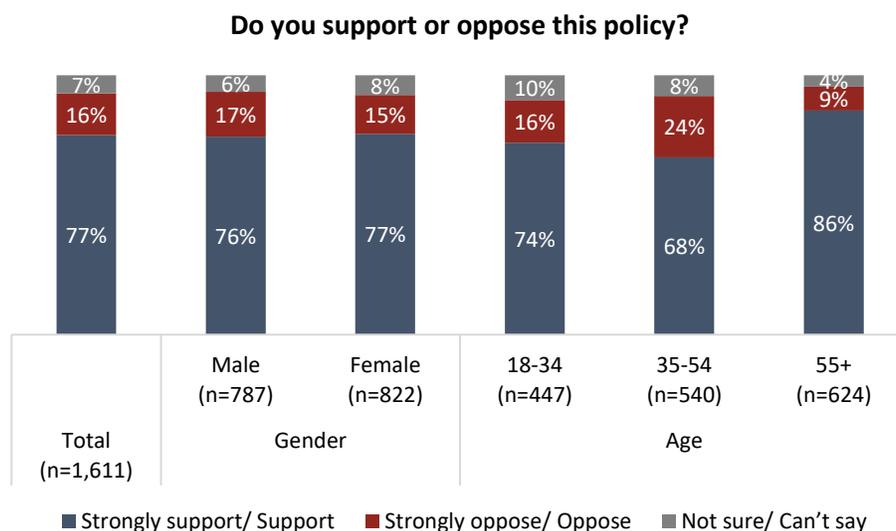
As COVID-19 spreads rapidly through China, there has been fear that [new variants could emerge from the country](#). In January, Canada followed other countries by instituting a requirement for travellers departing from China, Hong Kong or Macau to test [negative for COVID-19 before departure](#). The Chinese government denounced the policy, calling it ["discriminatory"](#).

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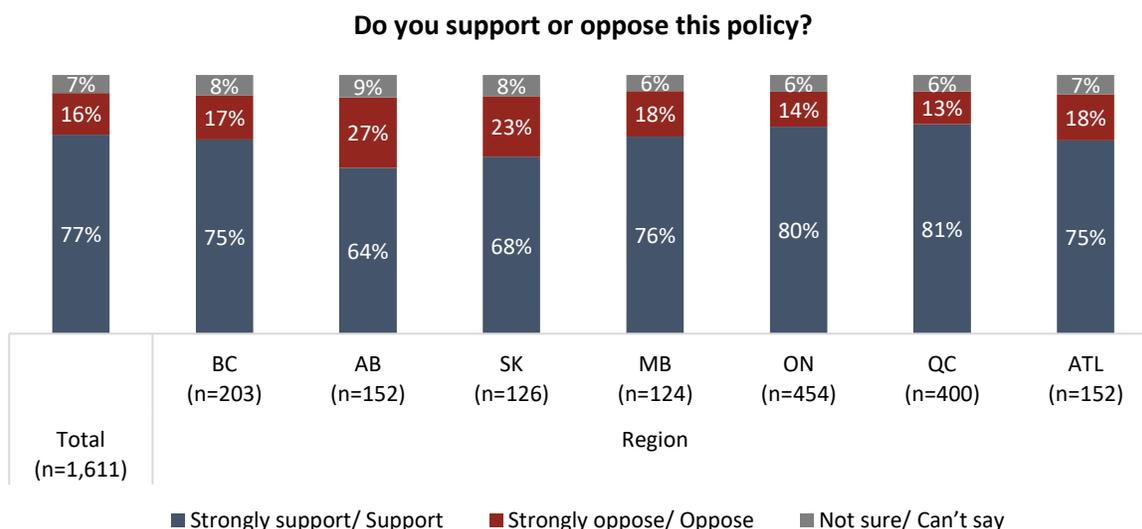
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Strong support for testing travellers from China

There is strong and widespread support for the policy to test travellers from China for COVID-19 among Canadians. Those who oppose it are outnumbered by nearly five to one. Canadians over the age of 54 are most likely to support the policy, while those aged 35 to 54 are the most likely to oppose:



Approaching three-in-ten (27%) Albertans and one-quarter (23%) in Saskatchewan say they oppose the policy to test travellers from China. Notably, most COVID-19 policies have been more likely to be opposed in those two provinces than others [over the course of the pandemic](#).



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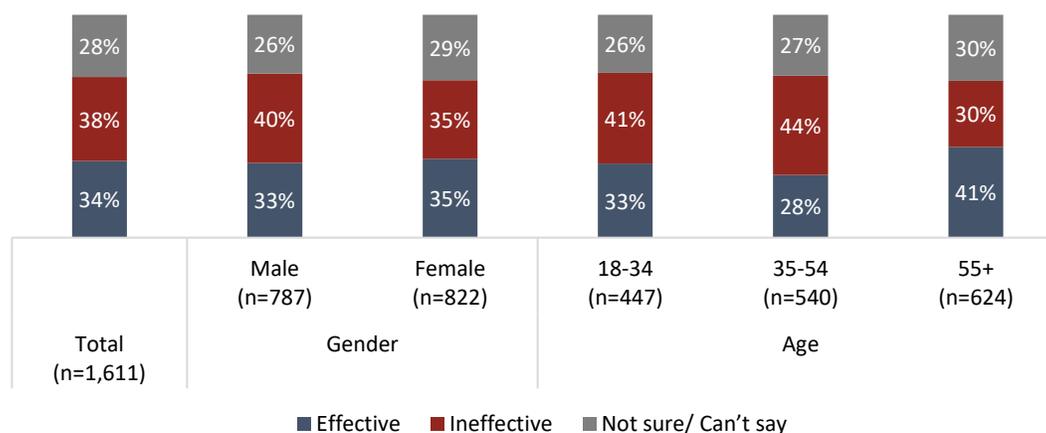
Most doubt policy's efficacy

Some health experts have panned the policy, expressing doubt it will be effective at preventing the emergence of new variants in Canada. "This is closing the barn door after the horse has already escaped," [said infectious diseases physician Dr. Matthew Oughton](#).

Two-in-five Canadians (38%) say it will be ineffective, and another three-in-ten (28%) say they aren't sure if it will reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Canada. One-third (34%) believe the policy will work as intended.

Canadians over the age of 54 are the most likely to believe the policy will be effective (41%). A plurality of Canadians younger than that believe testing travellers from China for COVID-19 won't reduce the spread of the virus in Canada:

And, thinking of this policy, do you think it will be effective at reducing the spread of COVID-19 in Canada, or not?

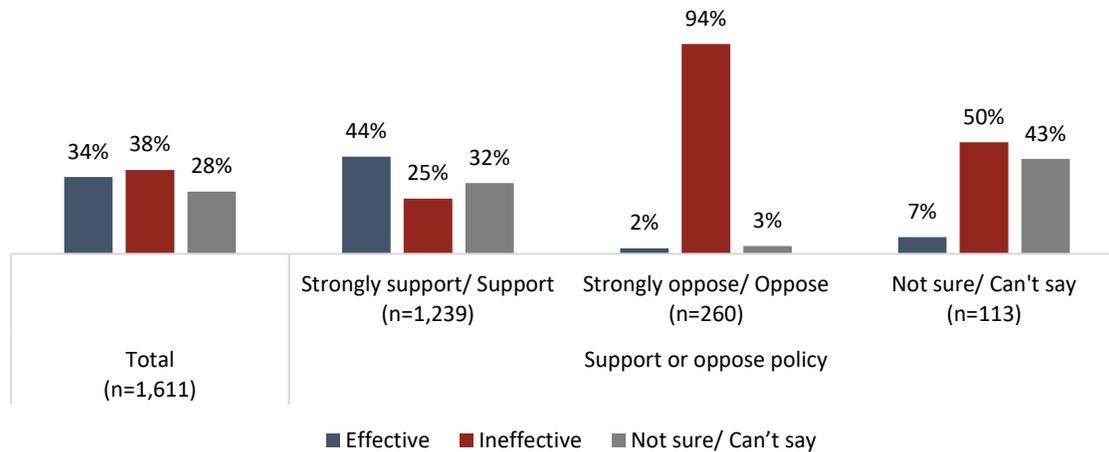


Even among supporters of the policy, those who believe it will be effective (44%) are outnumbered by those who have their doubts. The minority of Canadians who oppose the policy to test travellers from China for COVID-19 are near unanimous (94%) in their belief that it won't be effective at preventing further spread of the virus:

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And, thinking of this policy, do you think it will be effective at reducing the spread of COVID-19 in Canada, or not?



Is it racist? Most Canadians say “no”

As COVID-19 spread in the early waves of the pandemic, it carried with it a tide of racism and discrimination towards Canadians of Chinese descent due to the first cases emerging from Wuhan, China [in late 2019](#). An Angus Reid Institute study [in June 2020](#) found that half of Canadians of Chinese ethnicity said they had been called names or insulted as a direct result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Related: [Blame, bullying and disrespect: Chinese Canadians reveal their experiences with racism during COVID-19](#)

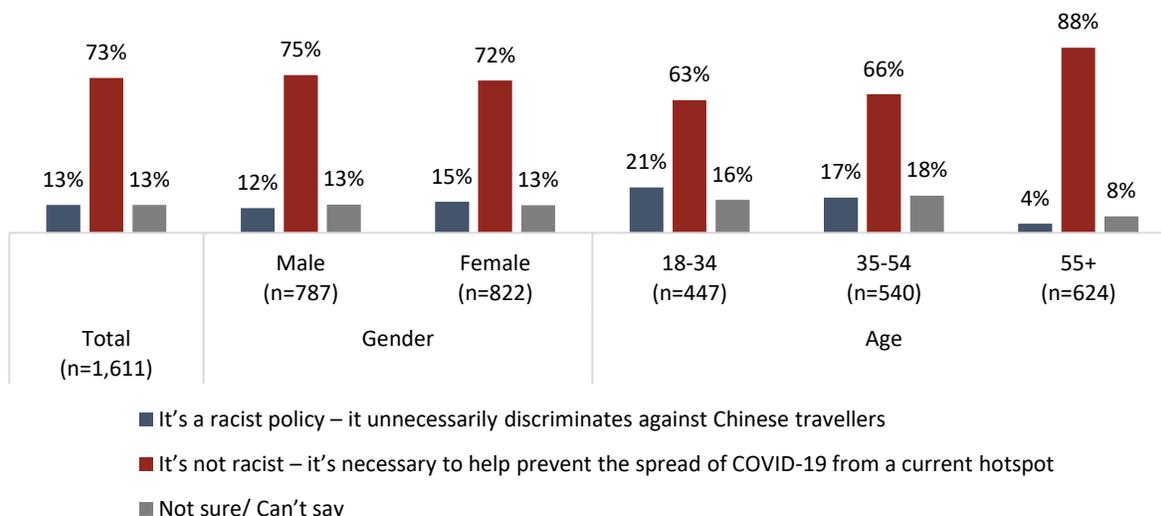
There is concern that this new selective testing policy targeting only travellers from China will inspire [further discrimination](#) towards Canadians of Chinese ethnicity.

One-in-eight (13%) Canadians believe the policy to be racist. However, most – approaching three-quarters (73%) – disagree. Younger Canadians are more likely to call the policy racist, but majorities of all age groups disagree:

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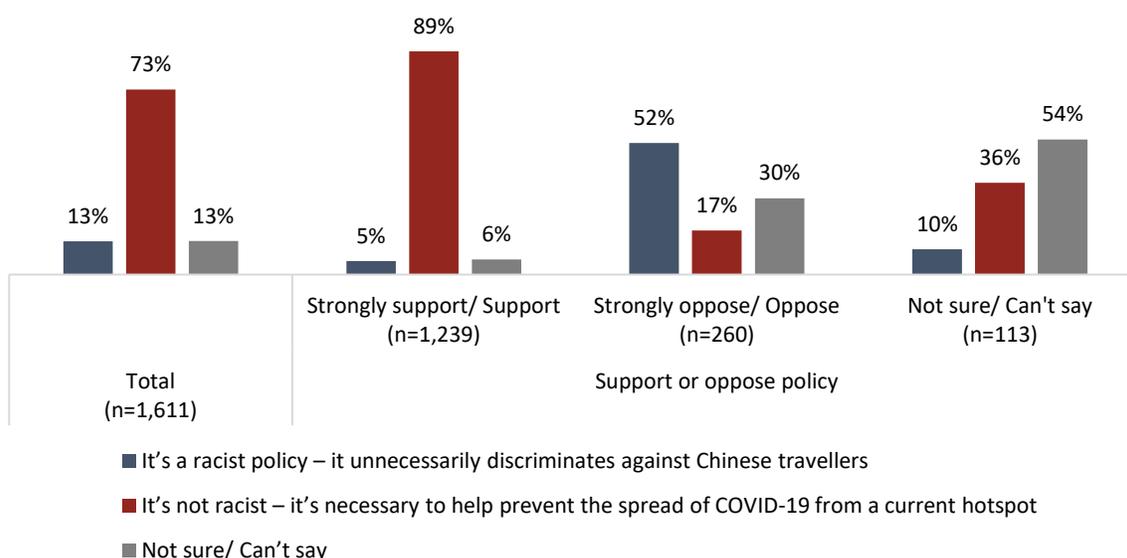
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What about you, what do you think of this requirement for travellers from China to test negative for COVID-19?



Half (52%) of those who oppose the requirement for travellers from China to test negative for COVID-19 believe it to be a racist policy. Nearly all (89%) who support the policy say it is not racist:

What about you, what do you think of this requirement for travellers from China to test negative for COVID-19?

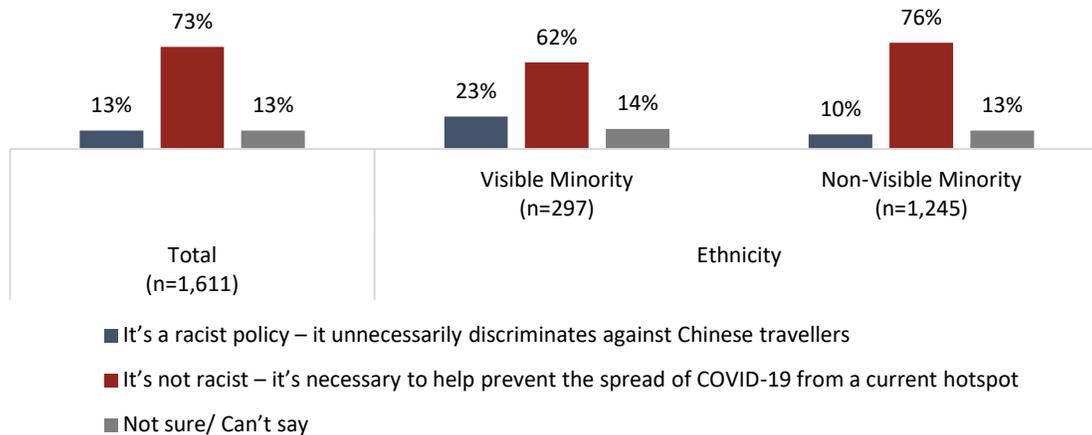


Canadians who identify as visible minorities are twice as likely (23%) as those who don't (10%) to say Canada's COVID-19 testing requirement for travellers from China is racist. However, notably, a majority of those who identify as visible minorities (62%) disagree:

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What about you, what do you think of this requirement for travellers from China to test negative for COVID-19?



Part Two: Travel in a lingering pandemic

As restrictions faded, Canadians began travelling at much higher rates in 2022. Though air passenger volume lagged behind volumes seen pre-pandemic, Canadians returned to the skies in numbers not seen since February 2020. And there could be more to come: two-in-five (43%) Canadians [say they plan to travel more](#) in 2023.

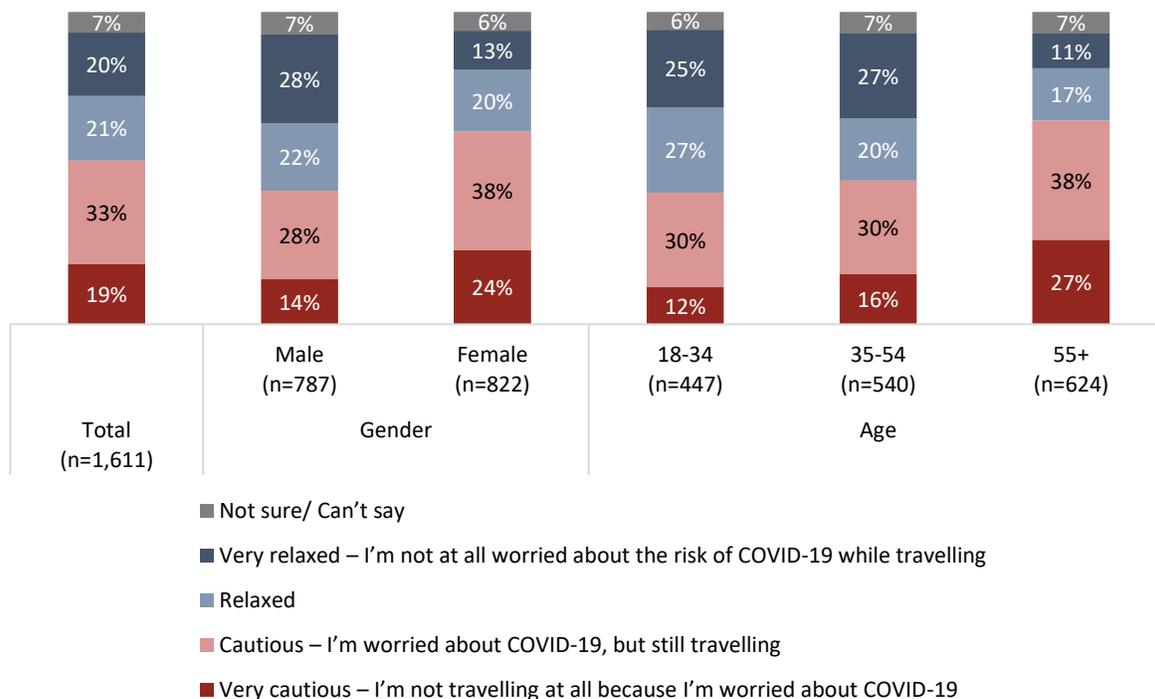
Related: [Holiday travel hell: More Canadians blame weather and airlines, than government, for recent chaos](#)

Half of Canadians approach travel with caution because of COVID-19

While restrictions have become more or less a thing of the past, COVID-19 still spreads and the possibility of catching the virus while travelling is on the minds of many Canadians. Half (52%) say they have been approaching travel in recent months with caution because of the threat of COVID-19. Two-in-five (41%) are more relaxed and less worried about the spectre of COVID-19 infection as they travel.

[As has been the case throughout the pandemic](#), older Canadians are more worried about the virus than younger ones. As well, women are more likely than men to say they've been approaching travel with caution towards COVID-19:

How would you describe your approach to travel outside of the country during the last nine months or so?



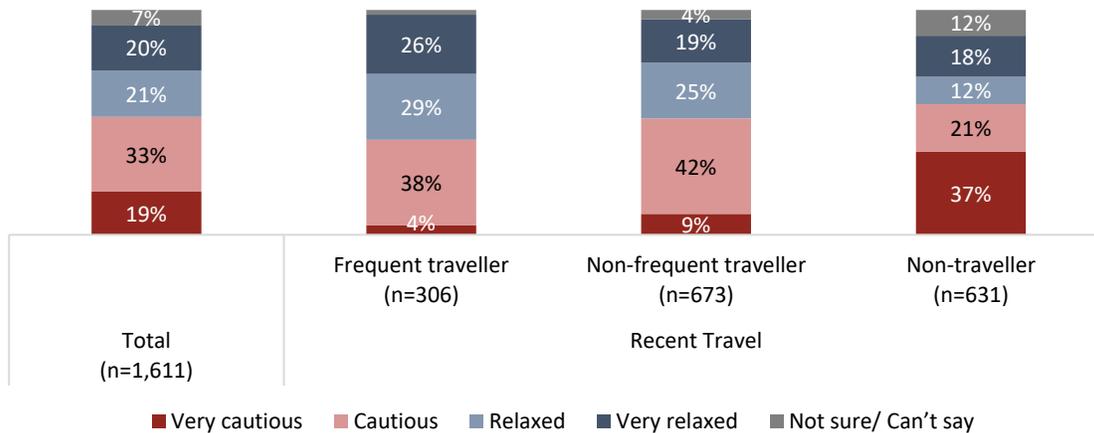
Two-in-five who have not travelled in last year say COVID-19 is keeping them home

More than half (56%) of those who have [travelled frequently](#) since most of the pandemic restrictions were lifted in March 2022 say they aren't worried about the risk of COVID-19 while travelling. Meanwhile, two-in-five (37%) of those who have not travelled in recent months out of their province, or out of Canada, say they aren't travelling at all because they're worried about COVID-19:

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How would you describe your approach to travel outside of the country during the last nine months or so?



For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

For detailed results by whether or not the respondent supports or oppose the policy, believe it to be effective or ineffective, or believe it to be racist or not, [click here](#).

For detailed results by frequency of travel, [click here](#).

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